

Message Text

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15
ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ISTANBUL 3629

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, TU
SUBJ: ISTANBUL RPP PROVINCIAL CONGRESS

SUMMARY: ISTANBUL'S REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) PROVINCIAL CONGRESS SEPTEMBER 11-12 WAS STORMY AFFAIR THAT AIRED DISSENSION WITHIN PARTY. CONGRESS CONFIRMED INCUMBENT PROVINCIAL CHAIRMAN AYTEKIN KOTIL IN HIS POSITION FOR ANOTHER TWO-YEAR TERM, AND ELECTED HIS SLATE OF CANDIDATES TO THE PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BY A SIZEABLE, BUT NOT OVERWHELMING, MAJORITY. END SUMMARY.

1. RPP CONGRESS OPENED SEPTEMBER 11 ON POSITIVE NOTE FOR PROVINCIAL CHAIRMAN KOTIL WHOSE CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDING OFFICER (ISTANBUL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTY ILHAN OZBAY) AND BOARD TO SUPERVISE ELECTION WERE ACCEPTED WITHOUT OPPOSITION BY THE 1066 DELEGATES. DURING READING OF COMMITTEE REPORT, HOWEVER AYTALYA DEPUTY DENIZ BAYKAL, FOCUS OF OPPOSITION TO ISTANBUL RPP INCUMBENT CLIQUE, MADE HIS ENTRANCE AND WAS GIVEN OVATION BY SPECTATORS IN THE BALCONY AND BY A GOOD SHARE OF THE DELEGATES. BAYKAL SAT WITH SUPPORTERS OF KOTIL'S RIVAL FOR PROVINCIAL CHAIRMAN, FARUK ERGIN SOY.

2. AFTER COMMITTEE REPORT WAS READ, SERIES OF SPEAKERS TOOK PODIUM, INCLUDING FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER DOGAN GUNES. PRIOR TO TUNES'SPEECH
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ONE OF ERGIN SOY SUPPORTERS, ISTANBUL DEPUTY METIN TUZUN, PROTESTED

AGAINST HIS SPEAKING ON GROUNDS IT WOULD PREJUDICE INTERESTS OF KOTIL'S OPPONENT. UPON BEING OVERRULED BY CHAIR, TUZUN WAS READY TO EXCHANGE BLOWS WITH RPP ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL ALI TOPUZ, WHO PERFORMED ROLE OF CHIEF SPOKESMAN FOR KOTIL GROUP WHICH IS CLOSELY ALIGNED WITH RPP SEC. GEN ORHAN EYUBOGLU. GUNES' SPEECH CALLED FOR UNITY, AND CHARACTERIZED SPLITS IN PARTY AS STRUGGLES BETWEEN PERSONALITIES. GUNES' FOLKSY STYLE WAS A WELL RECEIVED BY CONGRESS, AND HE WAS FREQUENTLY INTERRUPTED BY APPLAUSE.

3. FOLLOWING GUNES, DENIZ BAYKAL DELIVERED STINGING REPUKE OF THE RPP INNER CIRCLE'S "IVORY TOWER" APPROACH TO POLITICS AND ASSERTED THERE WAS LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN PRESENT RPP LEADERSHIP. BAYKAL, CLEARLY MOST ACCOMPLISHED ORATOR AT CONGRESS, DISPLAYED CONSIDERABLE CHARISMA AND WAS WILDLY APPLAUDED, ESPECIALLY BY NON-DELEGATES IN BALCONY. AFTER BAYKAL'S SPEECH, DESPITE INSISTENT CRIES BY ALI TOPUZ FOR CHANCE TO ANSWER HIM, CONGRESS RECESSED.

4. FOLLOWING DAY TOPUZ PICKED UP GAUNTLET AND BLASTED BAYKAL, ACCUSING THOSE WHO DO NOT FOLLOW POLICIES OUTLINED BY RPP CHAIRMAN BULENT ECEVIT OF BEING INFLUENCED BY FORCES OUTSIDE TURKEY. AYETKIN KOTIL ALSO HAD OPPORTUNITY TO DEFEND HIMSELF, POINTING AT HIS RECORD AND EMPHASIZING THAT RPP IN ISTANBUL UNDER HIS GUIDANCE HAD INCREASED ITS SHARE OF VOTES BY SIZEABLE PERCENTAGE. DESPITE BAYKAL'S INSISTENCE, OZBAY DENIED HIM ANOTHER CHANCE TO SPEAK, AND CONGRESS MOVED TO OTHER BUSINESS.

5. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S REPORT WAS APPROVED, AND ELECTION FOR PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP BEGAN. WHILE ELECTIONS WERE IN PROGRESS, FREE-FOR-ALL BROKE OUT BETWEEN RIVAL GROUPS, AND POLICE CLEARED THEATRE OF MOST SPECTATORS. WHEN VOTES FINALLY TALLIED, KOTIL BESTED ERGINSOY BY 571 TO 416 MARGIN. KOTIL SUPPORTED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SLATE WON 582 TO 407. IN BOTH COUNTS, A NUMBER OF VOTES WERE DECLARED INVALID.

6 COMMENT: THREE DAYS BEFORE CONGRESS, IN CONVERSATION WITH CONGEN OFFICERS, SENATOR RAHMI ERDEM ATTEMPTED TO PROJECT CONFIDENCE THAT KOTIL WOULD WIN. HOWEVER, CONGRESS REVEALED THAT LOCAL RIFT IN RPP IS SERIOUS, AND IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER KOTIL AND COMPANY CAN PREVENT DISSENSION FROM CUTTING INTO GROWING MAJORITY

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RPP HAS COMMANDED AT THE POLLS IN ISTANBUL. ISTANBUL RPP LEADERSHIP MAY HOWEVER, BE ABLE TO OFFSET ANY LOSSES FROM INTRA-PARTY RIVALRY BY BUILDING ON ITS ALLIANCE WITH ORGANIZED LABOR, ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL POLITICAL FORCES IN THE PROVINCE. KOTIL'S REPORT TO THE CONGRESS EMPHASIZED LABOR TIES, DETAILING RPP COOPERATION WITH DISK CONFEDERATION AND MENTIONING THAT LOCAL LEADER OF THE MAJOR NATIONAL CONFEDERATION, TURK-IS, WAS DISPOSED TO

SUPPORT RPP.

DISK EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER MEHMET MIHLACI, WAS RE-ELECTED AND
TWO OTHER LABOR LEADERS WERE AMONG THE TEN MEMBERS ELECTED
TO PRONINCIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.
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